

State of the City Address: Mayor Mike Cassinelli

January 2013

City Council members, fellow residents, business owners and guests. Thank you for joining me tonight.

To start off, let me say the first three years of my term have been very busy working with the council to bring about long-term improvements to our utility services, streets, sidewalks, storm drains and more. During the past two years, the council and I have held a number of workshops and worked with a consultant to address the issue of utility rates.

In 2012, the city implemented several utility billing service upgrades:

- Customers now receive full-page bills, **which helps reduce misplaced utility bills and provide space for city news.**
- New payment options are now available, **which allow customers a direct payment option from their bank accounts, or online credit and debit card payments.**
- A lower base rate was implemented for all water customers, and all consumption is now billed at a commodity rate. In 2013, a similar rate structure for the sewer utility began with the February billing. **By moving to a consumption-based water and sewer rate structure, the costs of services are more fairly allocated to each customer, and customers can control their increase or decrease depending on their water usage.**

In the future, the city will consider the option to have bills sent to customers by email, as well as view and pay their bills online.

In 2011, the Ilwaco Parks and Recreation Commission was formed, and last year they helped spearhead several projects:

- Hosted the 1st Annual Firecracker 5K Run and triathlon, and assisted with the 20th Annual Black Lake Fishing Derby.
- Worked with staff to manage a four-year \$75,000 grant awarded by Department of Ecology to remove invasive weeds on Black Lake.
- Acquired an easement so the Black Lake trail could be extended around the lake through private property.
- Working with an Eagle Scout to install docks on the east side of Black Lake.

These projects will help attract visitors and expand recreational opportunities within the city. In the future, the commission will conduct a citizen survey to help develop a parks plan, which will be used to seek grant funding for future projects, such as expanding trails and other recreational opportunities.

In 2012, the Ilwaco Fire Department made several upgrades to ensure the health and safety of citizens and visitors:

- Firefighter safety training videos were purchased, **which will allow for expanded training opportunities.**
- An aging ambulance was replaced through a donation from the Long Beach Fire Department, **which allows the department to maintain its certification for patient transport services.**
- Through donations, the association is working to complete the upstairs of the Fire Hall, which will provide for potential living quarters for volunteers.

Last year, the department was honored at an event hosted by the Long Beach Elks, which was featured in the Elk's national magazine.

In the future, the department will continue efforts to recruit volunteers, and I encourage you to get involved.

For the past few years, the council has approved a number of funding sources, such as grants, low-interest loans and debt refinance, which will provide much needed funding to improve streets, water and sewer facilities, sidewalks and storm drains in 2013 and 2014.

The results from the Citizen Satisfaction Survey conducted after my first year as mayor showed that maintaining city roads and sidewalks and improving storm drainage were two of the top three areas of concern for residents.

First off, to provide for street improvements, a stormwater utility was implemented in 2012. Additionally, last year several projects received funding and will move forward in 2013:

- Work that began in 2012 on the School Street reconstruction project will be completed. **This \$600,000 grant-funded project provided road and drainage improvements, new ADA-accessible sidewalks and lighting to this alternate route through Ilwaco.**
- Construction will begin on a \$52,000 sidewalk improvement project for Advent and Lake Streets, and a \$99,000 overlay for Brumbach. **These grant-funded projects will improve vehicle and pedestrian safety on two well-used transportation routes within the city.**
- Design will begin to reconstruct Elizabeth Avenue, with construction scheduled for 2014. **This \$598,000 grant-funded project will improve drainage, vehicle access and pedestrian safety to the Port of Ilwaco.**

Annually the council reviews and updates the streets plan. In the future, I encourage all of you to participate as the council prioritizes these projects for future funding.

The city is also committed to ensure water quality through bi-monthly discussions with the Department of Health to prioritize improvements to the water system, while utilizing existing resources to their full potential. Several projects that received funding in 2012 are scheduled for completion in 2013:

- A new 160,000 gallon reservoir will be constructed near the water treatment plant, the backwash basin at the plant will be upgraded and expanded, and a new 500,000 gallon reservoir will be constructed near the current city center reservoir site. **These projects, funded by 1-1/2 percent low-interest loans with a 30 percent loan forgiveness, will increase the capacity of the city's water system, replace an outdated old wooden reservoir, and upgrade and expand the city's backwash basin to increase capacity and improve filtering.**
- Logging road culverts in the city's watershed will be repaired. **This project is 100% funded by federal funds and will repair three large culverts that are deteriorating.**
- Two water filter units original to the plant will be replaced, and a new upflow clarifier unit will be installed at the Water Treatment Plant. **This \$940,000 grant-funded project will provide a fully-functioning automatic water treatment system.**
- Last year the city began updating the cross-connection program. **This program is vital to ensure the safety of the city's water distribution system.**
- This year, the city has budgeted funds to paint the steel reservoir, **which will address the concerns of neighbors in the area.**

Low-interest loans were also secured for several sewer improvement projects scheduled to move forward in 2013:

- Design is complete and construction will begin on the First Avenue North sewer line. **This project will replace badly deteriorated 50 plus year old sewer lines, which will improve the efficiency of the wastewater plant and routine sewer maintenance and inspection.**
- Pre-design for Sahalee sewer improvements will provide planning, environmental assessments and public participation. **This project will ultimately provide for a new sewer conveyance and lift station for Sahalee.**
- New sewer mains will be designed and constructed to relocate failing sewer lines on Nesadi. **This project will reduce the annual costs of continual replacement or repair of broken pipes in the area.**

In the future, the city will continue to work with the Department of Health, Department of Ecology and others to ensure our water quality and improve our water and sewer systems.

As I conclude this look back at the progress that has been made and plans for the future, we see many new upcoming projects to improve city streets, utilities, fire services and parks. As these projects, plans and events move forward, I encourage you to participate and get involved. In addition, your patience and understanding will also be needed as we experience road construction, traffic reroutes and other impacts. However, with these changes we can all look forward to long-term improvements to our utility services, parks, streets, sidewalks, storm drains and more, which will provide for our current residents and attract new residents in the future.